

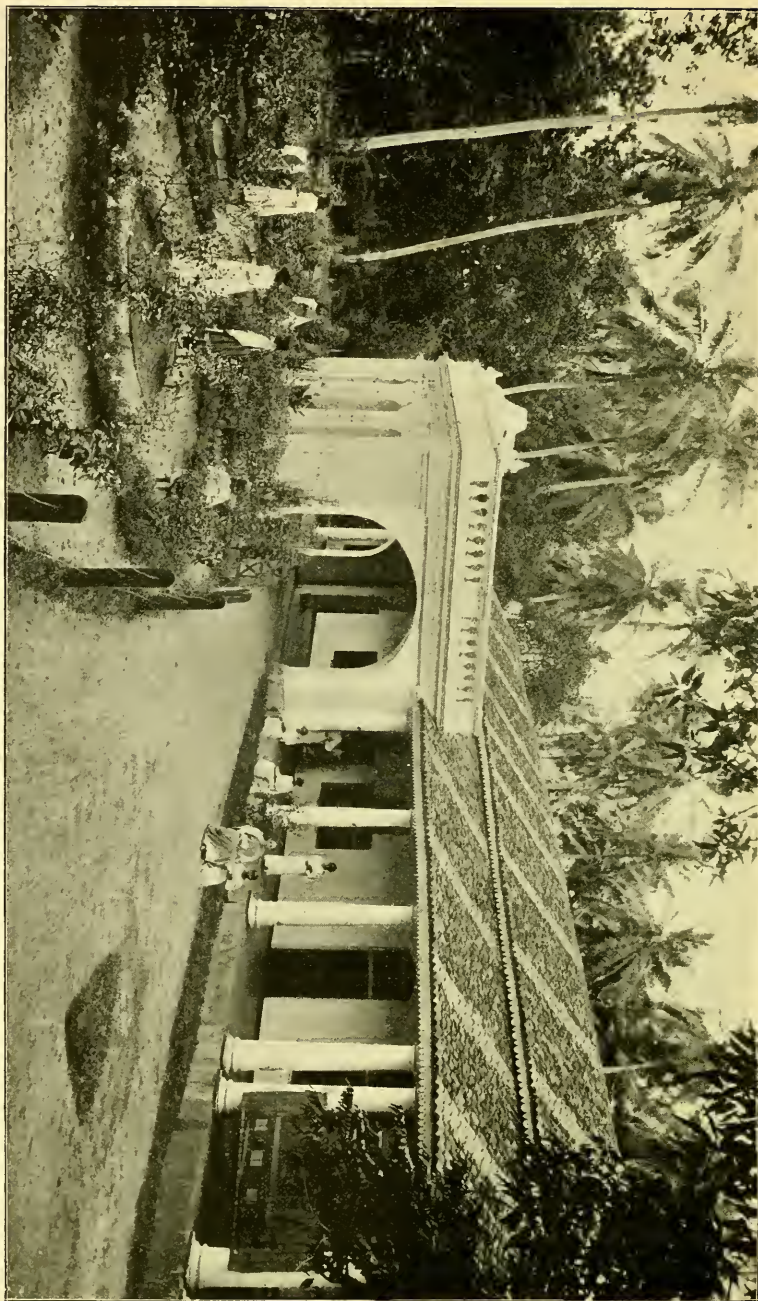


A MODERN INSTANCE OF WORLD-RENUNCIATION.

BY THE EDITOR.

COUNTESS M. de S. Canavarro, now of Ceylon, is a woman of rare qualities, which not only deserve our sympathy but also arouse our interest from a purely psychological point of view. About two years ago we read the New York newspaper reports of her departure for a new home with surprise, and, we must confess, not without serious misgivings and doubts as to the advisability of her bold step, for she was about to leave her American home and sever all family ties for the purpose of educating the women of an island in the far East, among the very antipodes of her adopted country, and to take upon herself new duties which meant uphill work and hard labor. We do not know much about her, except what the newspaper reporters in America and in Ceylon have to say and what we have gleaned from several personal letters giving life to the dry facts of the work which she is doing in public, and exhibiting a noble soul filled with the desire of living not for herself but for the benefit of mankind. The flame of her life is burning to give others light, and she finds her highest satisfaction in so employing herself that the good that is in her may spread.

The Countess was probably raised in the faith of the Roman Catholic Church, presumably on the peninsula which is severed from Europe by the Pyrenees. She lived the greater part of her life in the far West of the United States of America, and we may not be wrong when saying that she acquired here a sense for being practical and doing work methodically and with energy. No doubt there is much of the "I will" spirit in her. How she became estranged from the belief of her childhood is not known to us; apparently she felt a desire for a broader religion, less narrowed by dogma and yet affording her free scope for religious devotion



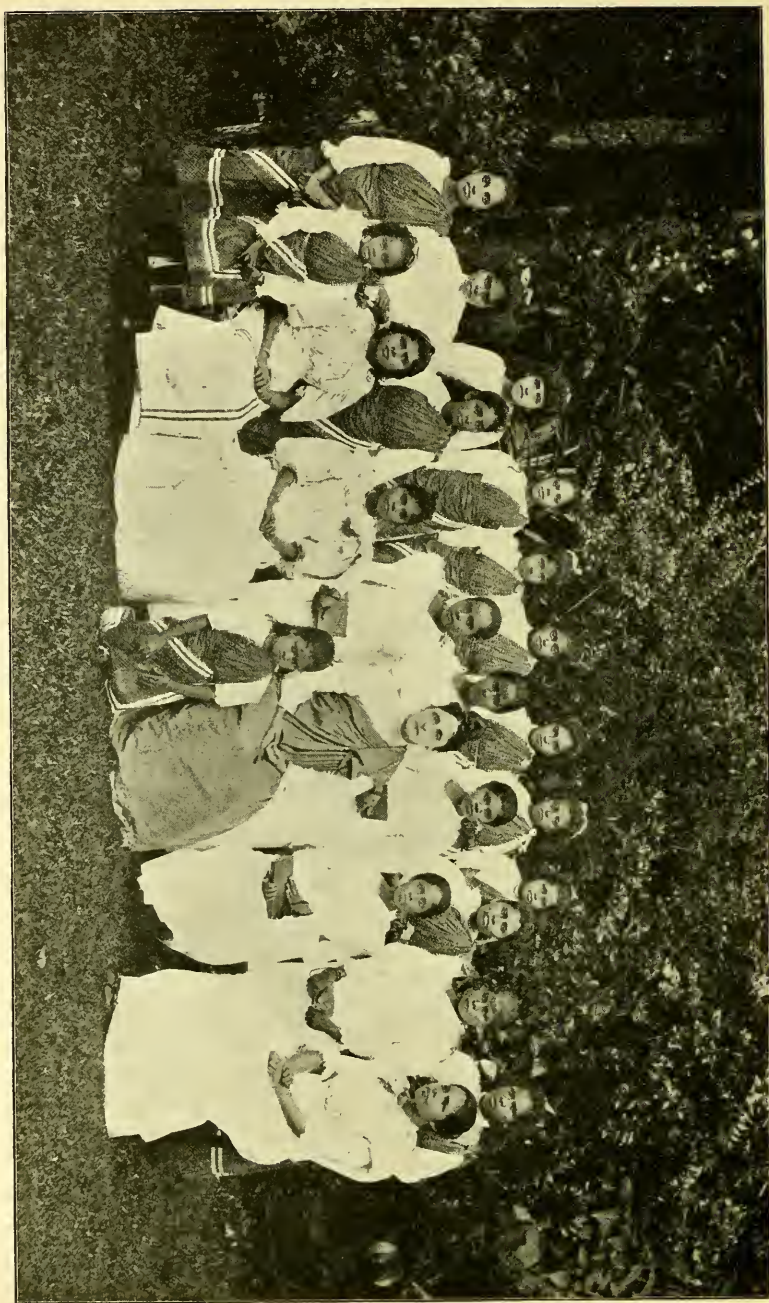
that shows itself in the practical work of sympathetic love. The hunger of her soul for unselfish usefulness found, after much vain search, the most appropriate expression in the doctrine of the Shakyaphilosopher, whom his followers call Buddha, the Enlightened One, or Tathagata, the perfect teacher and master. If she were asked what is her religion, she would confess herself a Buddhist; but she has repeatedly declared that she is not antagonistic to any other religion, least of all to Christianity. In one of her letters, recommending a Christian book as worth reading and considering, she says:

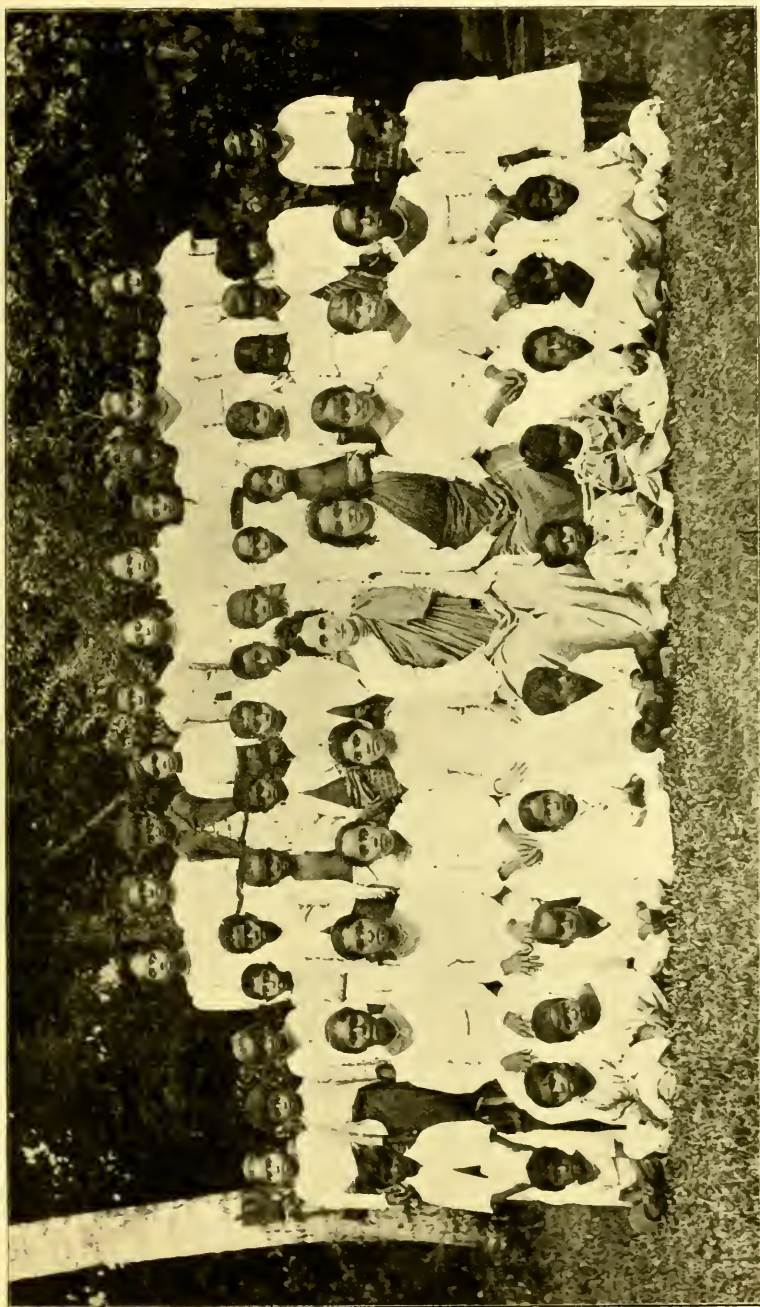
"The author is painstaking, truthful, and spiritual. Who can say more! What know we puny mortals of the spirit of man! 'Judge not lest ye be judged.' All believe they have the truth—every denomination, great and small alike, believe the truth is held in their special dogma. I believe I possess the truth, but I am not ready to say that no one else has it. To me truth is like the ocean, like eternity, embracing all things, not confined to any one thing. So wherever I turn, I gather jewels of the law."

The Countess went to Ceylon, not for the purpose of opening a campaign in the interest of a militant Buddhism or endeavoring to make converts, or counteracting Christian missions, nothing of the kind,—but simply to do educational work. She purchased a beautiful garden with a modest but pretty one-story building, and opened a school, an orphanage arranged for boarding pupils and admitting day scholars.

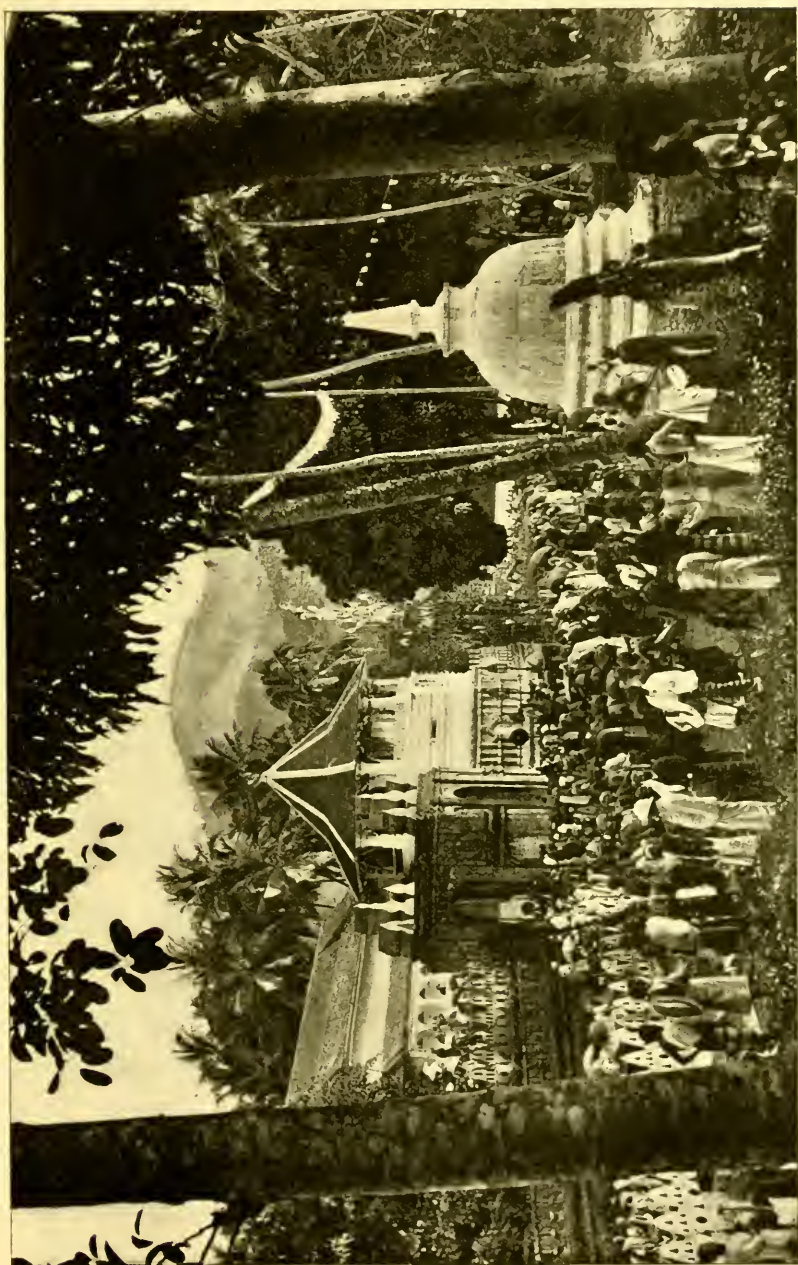
The newspapers of Ceylon, reflecting the opinion of her new countrymen, English as well as Singhalese, express great admiration for her executive ability and business talents. We have to add that although she had devoted all her own means to the enterprise, she still needs money and assistance. She has received help (so far as we know) from various sources, but new needs produce new demands, and the burden of caring for everything grows too much for her shoulders. She wrote for help to America, and we are informed that Miss Shearer, an American lady who saved the money for the long journey from her scant salary as a governess, has now gone to join the Countess and share the burden of the work, and we hope that she will be as buoyant and enduring as the Countess Canavarro herself when confronted with the many sacrifices which such a devotion necessarily demands.

We repeat that the religious devotion of Countess Canavarro not only deserves our sympathies (and we wish sincerely that she would receive more help from sympathetic friends), but is an object of interest to the psychologist. The Countess has lost the dogmatic





beliefs of her old Christian faith, and her motives are not dominated by a hope of acquiring saintship in heaven. Her belief in immortality is the Buddhist conviction that our deeds live,—a conviction which is so frequently denounced by the militant missionaries of Christianity as the dreariness of nihilism. She is a living example of the religious devotion which is recorded in the history of every, but especially the Christian, faith, and her character will help us to understand similar personalities of the past who have almost become mythological to us in the matter-of-fact atmosphere of the present age.



A BUDDHIST FESTIVAL.